

## Individual Judgement, Authority, And Governance

Certain current events caused me, as an observer, to again consider some philosophical and ethical questions regarding governance and authority. Questions which I attempted to answer in writings such as *Reflections On Conflict And Suffering*, and *Impersonal Abstractions, The Modern World, And The Axioms Of Empathy And Pathei-Mathos*.<sup>1</sup>

### The Events

The deployment of the US National Guard, and of Marines, during recent disturbances in Los Angeles,<sup>2</sup> the handcuffing and forcible removed of US Senator Alex Padilla (D-CA) for asking a question at a news conference held by a government representative, and the video of female Australian journalist Lauren Tomasi being hit by a rubber bullet during civil unrest in Los Angeles, are possibly recent and American examples of how a modern Western government/administration, and its leader or leaders can and will employ their obedient forces of 'law and order' to deal with civil unrest and to enforce their will, their diktats. Obedient forces because their members are duty-bound to obey a hierarchical traditional chain-of-command at the top of which is someone such as a President, a Prime Minister, or someone appointed by such a leader or such a commander-in-chief.

In Britain, this use of government-sanctioned and violent force during civil unrest was evident during the Miners' strike in the 1980s and in the more recent forcible arrests of people during pro-Palestinian protests in London.

Which use or force against civilians by established authorities is invariably defended as 'necessary' by representatives of the government-of-the-day and, again invariably, defended by some or by many pro-government sections of the Mass Media and by pro-government 'independent' journalists. In addition, governments-of-the-day seem to have a propensity, sometimes during but often after such civil disturbances, to introduce new laws, new legislation, giving their civil and armed forces more powers, more authority, to deal with such disturbances.

Thus, as decades pass, there are more and more, and often uncommented on, restrictions on what a citizen can and cannot do in public, for all 'public spaces' are deemed to be the purview of, under the control of, the government who can and who will using whatever force is necessary enforce their will on those using such spaces.

For me, this raises certain philosophical and ethical questions relating to governance and authority.

### The Questions

The basic questions concern individual judgement, the acceptance by an individual of a supra-personal authority, whether this acceptance is necessary for a society to function,<sup>3</sup> and whether it is morally right to use force and violence against dissenters and if so what are the limits.

Related questions are the nature of personal judgement and the nature of modern governance. Which lead to what, morally, dissenters can do and thus to the limits of dissent.

In attempting to answer such questions my guide, or as some might suggest my bias, is my weltanschauung of pathei-mathos and the axioms of that weltanschauung<sup>4</sup> derived as the axioms were from forty and more years of (mostly practical political and religious) experience 'in the world', and years of reflexion on, and studies regarding, that experience. The answers are thus personal, fallible, and possess no authority whatsoever.

### § Individual Judgement And Supra-Personal Authority

According to my understanding, the basis for individual judgement is the wordless knowing provided by the faculty of empathy combined with accumulated learning from pathei-mathos: from personal, practical, often difficult, harsh, adverse, or life threatening, experiences.

Thus, the judgement is the result of thoughtful personal reasoning and implies fairness, a balanced view; a personal view and understanding well-described by Heraclitus in fragment 112:

σωφρονεῖν ἀρετὴ μέγιστη, καὶ σοφίη ἀληθέα λέγειν καὶ ποιεῖν κατὰ φύσιν ἐπαίοντας  
Most excellent is balanced reasoning, for that skill can tell inner character from outer.

Hence why, in describing the weltanschauung of pathei-mathos, I used the term σωφρονεῖν (sophronein) as a synonym for such thoughtful personal reasoning, explaining that σωφροσύνη (sophrosyne) as used in that fragment is usually translated as something akin to "soundness of mind, moderation" which, invoking relatively modern concepts such as "mind" and "soundness", distorts the meaning, with σωφρονεῖν in the weltanschauung of pathei-mathos thus a metaphysical Anglicized Greek term requiring no inflective forms.

In contrast, the basis of supra-personal authority, as expressed in a chain-of-command, military, political, governmental, or otherwise, is the acceptance by individuals of the judgement of a 'higher', a supra-personal, authority. That the judgement of some other person or persons is better than, superior to, ours and thus the 'correct' one.

## § The Nature Of Personal Judgement

The nature - the physis <sup>5</sup> - of personal judgement is personal character which is revealed through personal example and thus by deeds. It cannot be contained, presented, expressed through a word or words (denotata) or by an 'idea' or 'ideal', or by anything supra-personal such as an -ism or an -ology be they political, religious, ideological, or social, just as the knowing of empathy cannot be so contained, restrained, expressed, or so revealed.

## § The Nature Of Governance

According to my admittedly fallible understanding, governance is based on two principles:

- (i) That some minority - a government (elected or unelected), or some military authority, or some oligarchy, or some already existing or new ruling elite, or some tyrannos, <sup>6</sup> or some leader - has or has assumed a mandate, or has the means, to exercise authority (and thus power and influence) over others, with that authority being exercised over a specific geographic area or territory.
- (ii) That the majority of citizens or subjects will be acquiescent regarding or obey the laws, proclamations, or diktats of that authority with public refusal to so obey deemed by that authority to be disruptive, or misguided, or 'wrong', or 'illegal' and if considered appropriate by the ruling authority or its functionaries render those so publicly refusing to acquiesce or obey liable to arrest by forcible or other means and again if considered appropriate by the ruling authority or its functionaries to be charged with some offence(s) and subsequently fairly tried in a government Court of Law and if found guilty liable to penalties including imprisonment. In the case of a non-elected authority such as a military one, the arrested or detained person is sometimes imprisoned without a fair trial or summarily executed.

## § The Vexatious Question Of Dissent

Whether it is morally wrong to use force and violence against peaceful public dissenters is a vexatious question because the answer seems to me to depend on whether an organized society requires some acquiescence regarding or some acceptance of such supra-personal authority as is or may be necessary for the orderly function of such a society, and because of who decides, with what existing or manufactured 'authority', what in terms of society is necessary, what is or is not 'acceptable' force or violence, and what criteria are employed in the making of such decisions.

My answer is that In respect of governance, acquiescence regarding or refusal in some way to obey 'a higher supra-personal authority' is or should be a personal choice. In respect of society it is also or should be a personal choice, with the consequence that those who consider society does require some acquiescence regarding or some acceptance of a supra-personal authority should withdraw internally or externally from society, be it alone, with a partner, or with one's family.

Internally in the sense of living in society but with no public or even private dissent of any kind; accepting of what-is with an understanding of how over periods of causal time all supra-personal authority - and the societies which require them or which some authority attempt to 'reform' or change or manufacture according to whatever criteria - will change and be replaced. <sup>7</sup>

Externally in the modern sense of going 'off-grid' or in the older sense of contemplative or spiritual isolation either reclusively or as part of a community.

## Conclusion: A Moral Alternative

The axioms of empathy and pathei mathos are a moral alternative because they have their unique being, their unique presencing, their life, in an individual. Which presencing enables or should enable the individual to choose how they deal with vexatious questions regarding suffering, society, supra-personal authority, and events involving the use by governments and others of force, violence, and of war as an instrument of change as required by some -ism or some -ology or by some supra-personal authority for some political reason or because of resources or because of a quest for power and/or for domination.

My own answers are in my extensive writings about my weltanschauung of pathei-mathos. In *Persecution And War* I wrote that, In the weltanschauung of pathei-mathos, authority is personal and that In practical terms:

"this means trying to cultivate within ourselves the virtues mentioned by Cicero - self-restraint, dignity, fairness, honesty - and implies we have no concern for or we seek to cultivate no concern for supra-personal hierarchies and supra-personal authority - whether political, religious, or otherwise - and thus move away from, try to distance ourselves from, the consequences of such supra-personal hierarchies and supra-personal authority manifest as the consequences are and have been, throughout our history, in war, prejudice, intolerance, unfairness, extremism, and persecution in the name of some ideology, some religion, or because someone has commanded us to persecute those that they and others have declared are 'our' enemies, and which war and persecutions are often, especially in modern times, accompanied by propaganda and lies." <sup>8</sup>

1. (i) <https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/conflict-and-suffering-dwmyatt.pdf> (ii) <https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/impersonal-abstractions.pdf>
2. Some members of the deployed forces have apparently questioned their deployment.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/jun/12/los-angeles-national-guard-troops-marines-morale>
3. By the term society is meant a collection of people who live in a specific geographic area or areas and whose association or interaction is mostly determined by a shared set of guidelines or principles or beliefs, irrespective of whether these are written or unwritten, and irrespective of whether such guidelines/principles/beliefs are willingly accepted or accepted on the basis of acquiescence. These shared guidelines or principles or beliefs often tend to form an ethos and a culture and become the basis for what is considered moral (and good) and thence become the inspiration for laws and/or constitutions.
- I generally use the term to refer to 'modern societies' (especially those of the modern West).
4. The basic axioms are described in Appendix One. For further details refer to *Axiomata Of Empathy And Pathei-Mathos*, <https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/dwm-axiomata.pdf>
5. In regard to physis, qv. Appendix IV, *The Concept Of Physis*, in *The Numinous Way Of Pathei-Mathos*, <https://perceiverations.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/numinous-way-pathei-mathos-v7.pdf>
6. The sense of τύραννος is not exactly what our fairly modern term tyrant is commonly regarded as imputing. Rather, it refers to the intemperate person of excess who is so subsumed with some passion or with some aim or some -ism or -ology or lust for power that they go far beyond balanced behaviour, of being fair and balanced in physis, and as a consequence exceed the limits of or misuse whatever authority they have been entrusted with or have acquired.
7. As noted in *Reflections On Conflict And Suffering*,

"In regard to the temporal nature of all human manufactured abstractions, this understanding results from both our personal pathei-mathos, and the culture of pathei-mathos, which provides us with a supra-personal, 'cosmic perspective', of for example not only nations, Empires, war, conquest, revolutions, invasions but also of every idea (ἰδέα/εἶδος) and all -isms and -ologies. For every human manufactured construct, such as a nation-State, not only has a limited life-span but is also subject to change, to revisions, to ameliorations, reformation, and re-interpretation.

Thus, in the example of a nation-State, the boundaries may change though war or invasion or conquest, as the peoples within the entity change though emigration and immigration and assimilation, and as the authority or authorities governing or ruling the entity can and do change over decades and centuries sometimes through internal revolution or invasion. A pertinent example being England before and after the Roman conquest, after the arrival of the Vikings and then after the Norman conquest followed centuries later by civil war and culminating in the immigration that occurred after the Second World War and which is continuing.

In regard to every idea (ἰδέα/εἶδος) and all -isms and -ologies, their change is inherent in the reality of them being dependent on denotatum or denotata which are by their physis the genesis of an opposite and hence of the resulting dialectic, of opposition." <https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/conflict-and-suffering-dwmyatt.pdf>

8. [https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/persecution\\_and\\_war.pdf](https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/persecution_and_war.pdf)

## Appendix One

### Axioms Of The Way Of Pathei-Mathos

- i) That human beings possess a mostly latent perceptive faculty, the faculty of empathy - ἐμπάθεια - which when used, or when developed and used, can provide us with a particular type of knowing, a particular type of knowledge, and especially a certain knowledge concerning the φύσις (the physis, the nature or character) of human beings and other living beings.
- ii) This type of knowing, this perception, is different from and supplementary to that acquired by means of the Aristotelian essentials of conventional philosophy and experimental science [1], and thus enables us to better understand Phainómenon, ourselves, and other living beings.
- iii) That because of or following πάθει μάθος there is or there can be a change in, a development of, the nature, the character - the φύσις - of the person because of that revealing and that appreciation (or re-appreciation) of the numinous whose genesis is this πάθει μάθος, and which appreciation of the numinous includes an awareness of why ὕβρις is an error (often the error) of unbalance, of disrespect or ignorance (of the numinous), of a going beyond the due limits, and which ὕβρις itself is the genesis both of the τύραννος [2] and of the modern error of extremism. For the tyrannos and the modern extremist (and their extremisms) embody and give rise to and perpetuate ἔρις [3] and thus are a cause of, or contribute to and aid, suffering.

iv) This change, this development of the individual, is or can be the result of enantiodromia [4] and reveals the nature of, and restores in individuals, the natural balance necessary for ψυχή [5] to flourish - which natural balance is δίκη as Δίκαια [6] and which restoration of balance within the individual results in ἁρμονία [7], manifest as ἁρμονία (harmony) is in the cultivation, in the individual, of wu-wei [8] and σωφρονεῖν (a fair and balanced personal, individual, judgement) [9].

v) The development and use of empathy, the cultivation of wu-wei and σωφρονεῖν, are thus a means, a way, whereby individuals can cease to cause suffering or cease to contribute to, or cease to aid, suffering.

vi) The reason as to why an individual might so seek to avoid causing suffering is the reason, the knowledge - the appreciation of the numinous - that empathy and πάθει μάθος provide.

vii) This appreciation of the numinous inclines or can incline an individual to living in a certain way and which way of life naturally inclines the individual toward developing, in a natural way - sans any methodology, praxis, theory, dogma, or faith - certain attributes of character, and which attributes of character include compassion, self-restraint, fairness, and a reasoned, a personal, judgement.

≡ ≡ ≡

## Footnotes

[1] The essentials which Aristotle enumerated are: (i) Reality (existence) exists independently of us and our consciousness, and thus independent of our senses; (ii) our limited understanding of this independent 'external world' depends for the most part upon our senses - that is, on what we can see, hear or touch; that is, on what we can observe or come to know via our senses; (iii) logical argument, or reason, is perhaps the most important means to knowledge and understanding of and about this 'external world'; (iv) the cosmos (existence) is, of itself, a reasoned order subject to rational laws.

Experimental science seeks to explain the natural world – the phenomenal world – by means of direct, personal observation of it, and by making deductions, and formulating hypothesis, based on such direct observation, with the important and necessary proviso, expressed by Isaac Newton in his Principia, that

"We are to admit no more causes of natural things than such as are both true and sufficient to explain their appearance..... for Nature is pleased with simplicity, and affects not the pomp of superfluous causes."

[2] The sense of τύραννος is not exactly what our fairly modern term tyrant is commonly regarded as imputing. Rather, it refers to the intemperate person of excess who is so subsumed with some passion or some aim or a lust for power that they go far beyond the due, the accepted, bounds of behaviour and thus exceed the limits of or misuse whatever authority they have been entrusted with. Thus do they, by their excess, by their disrespect for the customs of their ancestors, by their lack of reasoned, well-balanced, judgement [σωφρονεῖν] offend the gods, and thus, to restore the balance, do the Ἐρινύες take revenge. For it is in the nature of the τύραννος that they forget, or they scorn, the truth, the ancient wisdom, that their lives are subject to, guided by, Μοῖραι τρίμορφοι μνήμονές τ' Ἐρινύες -

τίς οὖν ἀνάγκης ἐστὶν οἰακοστροφός.  
Μοῖραι τρίμορφοι μνήμονές τ' Ἐρινύες

Who then compels to steer us?  
Trimorphed Moirai with their ever-heedful Furies!

Aeschylus (attributed), Prometheus Bound, 515-6

[3] Heraclitus, fragment 80:

εἰδέναι δὲ χρὴ τὸν πόλεμον ἔοντα ξυνόν, καὶ δίκην ἔριν, καὶ γινόμενα πάντα κατ' ἔριν καὶ χρεώμενα [χρεών]

One should be aware that Polemos pervades, with discord δίκη, and that beings are naturally born by discord.

See *Heraclitus - Some Translations and Notes*. <https://perceiverations.files.wordpress.com/2013/03/dwm-heraclitus-translations-notes.pdf>

In respect of the modern error of ὕβρις that is extremism, an error manifest in extremists, my understanding of an extremist is a person who tends toward harshness, or who is harsh, or who supports/incites harshness, in pursuit of some objective, usually of a political or a religious.

[4] See *The Change of Enantiodromia*, which is included in *The Numinous Way of Pathei-Mathos*, <https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/numinous-way-pathei-mathos-v7.pdf>

[5] The meaning here of ψυχή is derived from the usage of Homer, Aeschylus, Aristotle, etcetera, and implies Life qua being. Or, expressed another way, living beings are emanations of, and thus manifest, ψυχή. This sense of ψυχή is beautifully expressed in a, in my view, rather mis-understood fragment attributed to Heraclitus:

ψυχῆισιν θάνατος ὕδωρ γενέσθαι, ὕδατι δὲ θάνατος γῆν γενέσθαι, ἐκ γῆς δὲ ὕδωρ γίνεται, ἐξ ὕδατος δὲ ψυχή. Fragment 36

Where the water begins our living ends and where earth begins water ends, and yet earth nurtures water and from that water, Life.

[6] In respect of the numinous principle of Δίκη, refer to *The Principle of Δίκη*, in *The Numinous Way of Pathei-Mathos*, <https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/numinous-way-pathei-mathos-v7.pdf>

[7] Although φύσις has a natural tendency to become covered up (Φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ - concealment accompanies Physis) it can be uncovered through λόγος and πάθει μάθος.

[8] Wu-wei is a Taoist term used in The Way of Pathei-Mathos to refer to a personal 'letting-be' deriving from a feeling, a knowing, that an essential part of wisdom is cultivation of an interior personal balance and which cultivation requires acceptance that one must work with, or employ, things according to their nature, their φύσις, for to do otherwise is incorrect, and inclines us toward, or is, being excessive – that is, toward the error, the unbalance, that is hubris, an error often manifest in personal arrogance, excessive personal pride, and insolence - that is, a disrespect for the numinous.

In practice, the knowledge, the understanding, the intuition, the insight that is wu-wei is a knowledge, an understanding, that can be acquired from empathy, πάθει μάθος, and by a knowing of and an appreciation of the numinous. This knowledge and understanding is of wholeness and that life, things/beings, change, flow, exist, in certain natural ways which we human beings cannot change however hard we might try; that such a hardness of human trying, a belief in such hardness, is unwise, un-natural, upsets the natural balance and can cause misfortune/suffering for us and/or for others, now or in the future. Thus success lies in discovering the inner nature (the physis) of things/beings/ourselves and gently, naturally, slowly, working with this inner nature, not striving against it.

[9] Heraclitus, fragment 112:

σωφρονεῖν ἀρετὴ μέγιστη, καὶ σοφίη ἀληθέα λέγειν καὶ ποιεῖν κατὰ φύσιν ἐπαίοντας

Most excellent is balanced reasoning, for that skill can tell inner character from outer.

≡ ≡ ≡

Source:

<https://perceiverations.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/numinous-way-pathei-mathos-v7.pdf>  
Appendix Two

---

Attribution-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-ND 4.0) License  
All translations by DW Myatt

---